

## **Frequently Asked Questions About the Water Quality Protection Zone (WQPZ) Ordinance**

### **1. What is the purpose of the adopted ordinance?**

Several years ago, the City began work on a Storm Water Master Plan. Issues like storm water pollution and continuing degradation of water quality in Lake Thunderbird were addressed in that Plan. The Lake provides 75% of Norman's drinking water as well as drinking water for Del City and Midwest City. The Lake has been classified as "impaired" by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality. It has been reported that levels of chlorophyll-A are seven times greater than regulation standards. It has further been reported that the elevated amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, dissolved solids and sediment put the Lake at risk of developing algal toxins that threaten public health and recreational uses. The Storm Water Master Plan recommended that the City enact regulations that would provide buffers around the streams in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed as part of the overall effort to improve water quality.

These proposed ordinances are designed to do three things:

- Improve the quality of storm water before it enters Lake Thunderbird,
- Reduce flooding due to development along streams, and
- Reduce streamside erosion

### **2. What does the adopted ordinance (O-1011-52) do?**

The City's subdivision regulations exist to create a procedure by which land is developed i.e. subdivided through a plat or rural certificate of survey, in order to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of present and future residents, and to bring about the coordinated, efficient, and economic development of the City of Norman. (See City Code, Section 19-102).

The changes to the subdivision regulations require that new or expired plats and new Rural Certificates of Survey designate Water Quality Protection Zones (WQPZ) along streams. With the adopted ordinance, Developers may reduce the WQPZ without going through a variation process, upon a showing that water quality goals are being met and flooding concerns are being addressed.

### **3. What is a Water Quality Protection Zone?**

A vegetative strip of land along a stream.

**4. How wide is the Water Quality Protection Zone?**

Generally speaking, the WQPZ is typically a strip of land on a larger parcel that abuts a stream. The WQPZ is the greater of the following:

- 100 feet in width measured from the top of the stream bank out on either side of the stream
- The width of the 100 year floodplain established by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA)
- The width of land adjacent to streams that would be covered with water in the event a 100 year flooding event occurred during a time when all property within the watershed has been fully built out in accordance with the current Norman Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan (Stream Planning Corridor or SPC)

As noted, the width can be reduced if water quality goals are being met and flooding concerns are being addressed.

**5. What property in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed is affected by this ordinance?**

Subdivision Regulation Amendment (O-1011-52): The amendment to the subdivision regulations is not retroactive. The new regulations would only affect property that:

- Is platted/developed in the future,
- Is located in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed, and
- Contains a stream or designated floodplain

**6. Does this ordinance impose a new rate or tax on my property?**

No. Taxes and utility rates in the City of Norman can only be imposed by a vote of the people.

**7. Does this ordinance require me to dedicate any property to the City?**

No. Drainage easements for the designated Water Quality Protection Zone are required by the amendments to the Subdivision Regulations for new or expired preliminary plats and Norman Rural Certificates of Survey to allow the City access in the future for maintenance of streams and flood control efforts. As a property owner, you retain title to your property and are not required to provide any access to the general public to the Water Quality Protection Zone.